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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: TBIO KHIV KFLU FR
SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL UNION'S LUNG CONFERENCE - PUNCHING ABOVE ITS
WEIGHT

REF: (05) PARIS 7328

¶11. SUMMARY: The International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease convened the 37th Union World Conference on Lung Health from October 31 to November 4, 2006 in Paris, France. The Union's annual conference is the world's premier meeting of tuberculosis and public health experts dedicated to reducing the burden of disease and strengthening health systems in low-income countries. This year, over 2,100 participants from 125 countries attended the conference and shared their experiences and addressed the conference theme of "Strengthening Human Resources for Better Lung Health." END
SUMMARY.

¶12. As a reflection of the complexity of global health challenges, the issues discussed at the conference extended beyond tuberculosis (TB) to include: extensive drug resistant tuberculosis (XDRTB); the HIV/TB co-epidemic; the impact of increased tobacco use in low-income countries; the destabilizing potential of an Avian Influenza epidemic; and the human resources challenges facing health care providers in high-burden countries. Dr. Jorge Sampaio, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to the Stop TB Partnership and the

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former President of Portugal, was the keynote speaker at the opening ceremony. Throughout his speech, Dr. Sampaio emphasized the global responsibility to invest in the health care workforce and urged donor and recipient countries to elevate this issue to the top of their public health priorities. In addition to the keynote speech, Professor M. Kazatchkine (France's Ambassador on HIV/AIDS and

Transmissible Diseases) read a letter from French President Jacques Chirac welcoming the participants to France and encouraging them in their efforts to reduce the global burden of disease.

The crisis in human resources

¶3. Over 10 million people die annually from tuberculosis and other lung diseases, as well as HIV. The majority of this global burden of disease is centralized in developing countries, where the scale of the challenges often greatly outweighs the resources available to address them. For example, Sub-Saharan Africa has 11% of the world's population and 25% of the global burden of disease, but only 4% of the world's trained health workers and 1% of global health expenditure. In these countries, health workers struggle with poor working conditions, inadequate supplies of drugs and equipment, heavy work loads, long hours, low pay, inadequate pay and the constant threat of infectious disease. Faced with these conditions, many health workers leave their professions for different work or take positions in wealthier countries that offer better opportunities. Strengthening human resources must be an essential component in all efforts to combat the growing global disease burden, highlighted a number of conference speakers.

The emergence of extensive drug-resistant tuberculosis

¶4. The consequences of inadequate efforts in TB control are evident in the emergence of XDRTB, a virtually untreatable form of TB, in several countries including South Africa, Russia, Latvia and the United States. A special session of the conference was devoted to this topic and featured an international panel of experts and former patients with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDRTB). In addition, the conference schedule included a post-graduate course, 3 symposia and several presentations and posters that addressed the links between MDR and XDRTB, HIV and human resources development.

Tuberculosis and HIV: two diseases, one health system

¶5. The challenges presented by the HIV and TB co-epidemic maintained a high profile throughout the conference. A combination of post-graduate courses, symposia, posters and plenary sessions presented the latest research and facilitated discussions on treatment options for co-infected patients, ARVs, TB diagnostic challenges for HIV+ patients, community advocacy, policy implications and barriers to implementation for integrated TB/HIV care.

¶6. The 38th Union World Conference will be held from 8th - 12th November 2007 in Cape Town, South Africa. The theme of next year's conference will be: "Confronting the Challenges of HIV and MDR in TB Prevention and Care."

¶7. COMMENT: Due to the proliferation of lung disorders world-wide and their increasing complexity, this conference has taken on increasing importance in recent years. Organized by the International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, a number of officials, epidemiologists, and clinicians in the U.S. public health system provided their knowledge and expertise to make this conference a success for health practitioners and policymakers from the hard hit countries in the developing world. The International Union, with help from its friends, definitely punches above its weight. END COMMENT.

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